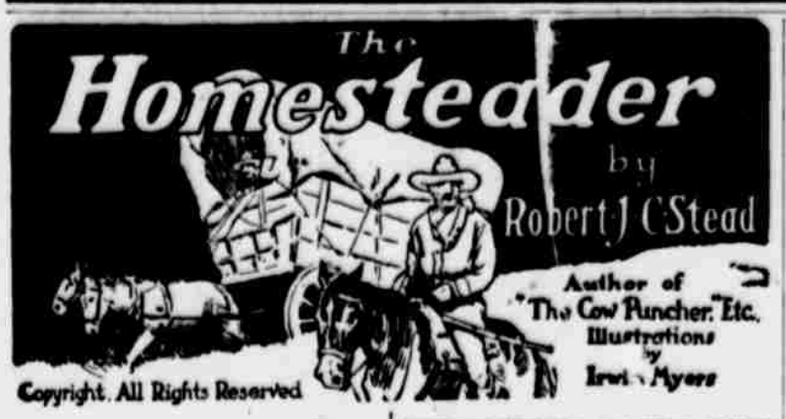

It was now 10 at night, and almost dark, but Harris' footsteps instinctively turned down the road toward Riles'.

At the gate he met Allan, returning home from spending a social hour with the Grant boys.

"Where going, Dad?" the younger man demanded.

"Oh, I thought I'd take a walk over t' Riles'. There's a lot o' things t' talk about."

"What's the matter, Dad?" The strained composure of his father's voice had not escaped him.

"Nothin' * * * I might's well tell you now; you'll know it in a little while anyway. * * * Your mother is goin' away—on a visit."

"Like Beulah's visit, I suppose. So it's come to this. I've seen it for some time, Dad, and you must 've seen it too. But you're not really goin' to let her go? Come back to the house with me—surely you two can get together on this thing, if you try."

"I have tried," said Harris, "and it's no use. She's got those notions like Beulah—quittin' work, and twilights and sunsets and all that kind o' thing. There's no use talkin' with her; reason don't count for anything. I gave her a good pocketful o' money and told her to write for more when she needed it. She'll get over her notions pretty soon when she gets among strangers. Go in and have a talk with her, boy; there's no use you bein' at outs with her, too. As for me, I can't do anything more."

"I suppose you know best," he answered, "but it seems—hang it, it's against all reason that you two—that this should happen."

"Of course it is. That's what I said a minute ago. But reason don't count just now. But you have your talk with her, and give her any help you can if she wants t' get away at once."

Allan found his mother in her room, packing a trunk and gently weeping into it. He laid his hand upon her, and presently he found her work-worn frame resting in his strong arms.

"You're not going to leave us, mother, are you?" he said. "You wouldn't do that?"


"You're Not Going to Leave Us, Mother, Are You?"

"Not if it could be helped, Allan. But there is no help. Your father has set his heart on more land, and more work, and giving up this home, and I might as well go first as last. More and more he is giving his love to work instead of to his family. Perhaps when I am away for a while he'll come to himself. That's our only hope."

The boy stood helpless in this confliction. He knew something of the depth of the nature of his parents, and he knew that beneath an undemonstrative exterior they cherished in secret a love proportionate to the strength of their character. But the long course down which they had walked together seemed now to be separating, through neither will nor power of their own; it was as though straight parallel lines suddenly turned apart, and neither lost its straightness in the turning.

So he comforted his mother with such words as he could. Loyalty to his father forbade laying any of the blame on those shoulders, and to blame his mother was unthinkable; so with unconscious wisdom, he spoke not of blame at all.

"Of course, while we are away, why shouldn't you have a visit?" he said. "Here you have been chained down to this farm ever since I can remember, and before. And then, when I get settled on my own homestead, you'll come and keep house for me, won't you?"

"You're sure you'll want me?" she asked, greatly comforted by his mood. "Perhaps you'll be getting your own housekeeper, too."

"Not while I can have you," he answered. "You'll promise, won't you? Nothing that has happened, or can happen, will keep you from making my home yours, will it? And when Dad gets settled again, and gets all these worries off his mind, then things'll be different, and you'll come, even if he is there?"

"Yes, I'll come, even if he is there, if you ask me," she promised.

Harris did not come back that night. A light rain came up, and he accepted the excuse to sleep at Riles'. The truth was, he feared for his resolution if it should be attacked by both his wife and son. Surrender now would be mere weakness, and weakness was disgrace, and yet he feared for himself if put to the test again. So he stayed at Riles', and the two farmers spent much of the night over their plans. It had been decided that they were to leave within the next couple of days, but Harris broke the news that his wife was going on a visit, and that arrangements would have to be made for the care of the farm.

Riles took the suggestion of a few days' delay with poor grace.

"Yes an' while you're chasing up an' down for a housekeeper the Yankees get all the homesteads. They're comin' in right now by the train load, grabbin' up everythin' in sight. We'll monkey round here till the summer's over, an' then go out an' get a sand farm, or something like. Couldn't your wife do her visitin' no other time?"

"I'll tell you, Riles," said Harris who had no desire to pursue a topic which might lead him into deep water, "you go ahead out and get the lay of the land, and I'll follow you within a week. I'll do that, for sure, and I'll stand part of your expenses for going ahead, seein' you will be kind o' representin' me."

The last touch was a stroke of diplomacy. The suggestion that Harris should pay part of his expenses swept away Riles' bad humor, and he agreed to go on the date originally planned, and get what he called "a hede on the easy money," while Harris completed his arrangements at home.

He was to get "a hede on the easy money" in a manner which Harris little suspected.

* * * * * * * * * *

When Harris returned home the next forenoon he found that Mary had already left for Plainville. He sat down and tried to think, but the house was very quiet, and the silence oppressed him. * * * He looked at his watch, and concluded he had still time to reach Plainville before the train would leave. But that would mean surrender, and surrender meant weakness.

CHAPTER IX

A Whiff of New Atmosphere.

Riles found the journey westward a tiresome affair. It was his first long rail journey in over 20 years, but his thoughts were on the cost of travel rather than on the wonderful strides which had been made in its comfort and convenience.

As fate would have it, Riles selected as the base of his homestead operations the very foothill town to which Beulah Harris had come a few weeks before. He sought out the cheapest hotel, and having thrown his few belongings on the bed, betook himself to the bar room, which seemed the chief center of activity, not only of the hotel itself, but of the little town. Men were lined three deep against the capacious bar, shouting, swearing, and singing and spending their money with an abandon not to be found in millionaires.

Riles debated with himself whether the occasion justified the expenditure of 10 cents for a drink when a hand was placed on his shoulder, and a voice said, "Have one with me, neighbor." He found himself addressed by a man of about his own age, shorter and somewhat lighter of frame and with a growing hint of corpulence. The stranger wore a good pepper-and-salt suit, and the stone on his finger danced like a real diamond.

"Don't mind if I do, since y' mention it," said Riles, with an attempted smile which his bad eye rendered futile. One of the bartenders put something in his glass which cut all the way down, but Riles speedily forgot it in a more exciting incident. The man in the pepper-and-salt suit had laid half a dollar on the bar, and no change came back. Riles congratulated himself on his own narrow escape.

"You'll be looking for land?" inquired the stranger, when both were breathing easily again.

"Well, maybe I am, and maybe I ain't," said Riles guardedly. He had heard something of the ways of confidence men and was determined not to be taken for an easy mark.

"A man of some judgment I see," said his new acquaintance, quite unabashed. "Well, I don't blame you for keeping your own counsel. The rush of people and money into the West has brought all kinds of floaters in its train. Why"—with growing confidence—"the other night——"

What happened the other night remained untold, for at that moment came a clattering of horse's hoofs on the wooden walk at the door, and a moment later a gayly arrayed cowboy rode right into the room, his horse prancing and bodying from side to side to clear the crowd away, then facing up to the bar as though it were his manger. Riles expected trouble, and was surprised when the feat evoked a cheer from the bystanders.

"That's Horseback George," said the man in the pepper-and-salt. "They say he sleeps on his horse. Rides right into a bar as a matter of course, and maybe shoots a few bottles off the shelves as a demonstration before he goes out. But he always settles, and nobody minds his little peculiarities."

Horseback George treated himself twice, proffering each glass to his horse before touching it himself, and stroking with one hand the animal's ears as he raised the liquor to his lips. Then he threw a bill at the bar tender and, with a wild whoop, slapped the horse's legs with his hat, and dashed at a gallop out of the bar room and away down the trail.

Riles betook himself to his room. He had just got into bed when a knock came at the door.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"Gen'l'man to see Mr. Riles," said the porter.

"Well, shoot 'im in. The door ain't locked," said Riles, in considerable


"Well, if It Ain't Gardiner!" He Exclaimed.

wonderment as to who his visitor might be.

The door opened, and a well-dressed man of average height, with carefully combed hair and clean-shaven face, save for a light mustache, stood revealed in the uncertain glow of the match with which Riles was endeavoring to find his lamp. His visitor was a man of twenty-eight or thirty years, with clear eyes and well-cut face, and yet with some subtle quality in his expression that implied that under his fair exterior lay a deep cunning, and that he was a man not to be trusted in matters where his own interests might be at stake.

"Hello, Hiram," he said quietly. "You didn't figure on seeing me here, did you?"

At first glance Riles did not recognize him, and he raised the oil lamp to turn the light better on the stranger's face.

"Well, if it ain't Gardiner!" he exclaimed. "Where in Sam Hill did you come from?"

"It's a big country, Hiram," he said with a touch of bitterness, "but not big enough for a fellow to lose himself in." He sat down on the side of the bed and lit a cigar, tendering another to Riles, and the two men puffed in silence for a few minutes.

"Yes, I've hit a lot of trail since I saw you last," he continued, "and when you're in the shadow of the Rockies you're a long piece from Plainville. How's the old burg? Dead as ever?"

"About the same," said Riles. "You don't seem t' be wastin' no love on it."

"Nothing to speak of," said the other, slowly flicking the ash from his cigar. "Nothing to speak of. You know I got a raw deal there, Hiram, and it ain't likely I'd get enthusiastic over it."

"Well, when a fellow gets up against the law an' has t' clear out," said Riles, with great candor, "that's his funeral. As for me, I ain't got nothin' agen Plainville. You made a little money there yourself, didn't you?"

The younger man leaned back and slowly puffed circles of fragrant smoke at the ceiling, while Riles surveyed him from the head of the bed. He had been a business man in Plainville, but had become involved in a theft case, and had managed to escape from the town simply because a fellow man whom he had wronged did not trouble to press the matter against him.

Gardiner showed no disposition to reopen the conversation about Plainville, so at last Riles asked, "How d'you know I was here?"

"Saw your scrawl on the register," he said, "and I've seen it too often on wheat tickets to forget it. Thought I'd look you up. Maybe can be of some service to you here. What are you chasing—more land?"

"Well, I won't say that, exactly, but I kind o' thought I'd come out and look over some of this stuff the government's givin' away, before the furriners gets it all. Guess if there's anythin' free goin' us men that pioneered one province should get it on the next."

"You don't learn anything, Riles, do you? You don't know anything more about making money than you did 20 years ago."

"Well, maybe I don't, and maybe I do, but I can pay my way, an' I can go back t' Plainville when I like, too."

"Don't get hot," said Gardiner, with unshaken composure. "I'm just trying to put you wise to yourself. Don't make any difference to me if you spend your whole life sod-busting; it's your life—spend it any way you like. But it's only men who don't know any better that go on to the land nowadays. It's a lot easier to make a living out of farmers than out of farming."

"Well, p'r'aps so, but that's more in your line. I never——"

"That's just what I say—you never learn. Now look at me. I ain't wearing my last suit, nor spending my last dollar, either, and I haven't done what you'd call a day's work since I came west. There's other things so much easier to do."

"Meanin'?——"

"Oh, lots of things. Remittance men, for instance. These woods are full of them. Chaps that never could track straight in the old ruts, and were sent out here where there aren't any ruts at all. They're not a bad bunch; brought up like gentlemen, most of 'em; play the piano and talk in three or four languages, and all that kind of stuff, but they're simply dangerous with money. So when it comes to hand, in the public interest they have to be separated from it."

"Sounds interestin'," said Riles.

"'Tis, too, especially when one of 'em don't take to the treatment and lays for you with a gun. But my hair's all there. That's what comes of wearing a tall hat."

"Tell me," said Riles, his face lit up with interest, "how d'ye do it?"

"'Twouldn't do you any good," said Gardiner. "You've steered too many plow handles to be very nimble with your fingers. But there's often other game to be picked up, if a man knows where to look for it."

"Well, I wish I knew," Riles confessed. "Not anythin' crooked, y' know, but something like—well, something like you're doin'. I've worked hard for ev'ry nickel I ever made, an' I reckon if there's easy money goin' I've a right t' get some of it."

"Now you're beginning to wake up. Though, mind you, some of it isn't as easy as it looks. You've got to know your business, just like farming or anything else. But you can generally land something to live on, even if it ain't a big stake. Take me now, for instance. I ain't doing anything that a preacher mightn't do. Happened to fall in with a fellow who owns a ranch up the river here. Cleaned him empty one night at cards—stood him up for his last cent, and he kind o' took a notion to me. Well, he's the son of a duke or an earl, or some such thing, and not long ago the governor goes and dies on him, leaving him a few castles and brick-a-brac like that and some wagon loads of money. So he had to go home for the time being and as he wanted someone to run his ranch, who should he think of but me. Suppose he thought if I happened to bet it at poker some night I wouldn't lose it, and that's some consideration. He's got 1,000 acres or so of land up there, with a dozen cayuses on it, and he gives me 25 pounds a month, with board and lodging and open credit at the trading company, to see that it doesn't walk away in his absence. Besides that, I hire a man to do the work, and charge his wages up in the expenses. Got a good man, too—one of those fellows who don't know any better than work for a living. By the way, perhaps you know him—comes from Plainville part—Travers his name is?"

"Sure," said Riles. "He worked for Harris, until they had a row and he lit out. It kind o' balled Harris up, too, although he'd never admit it. If he'd Travers there it'd be easier for him t' get away now."

"Where's Harris going?"

"He ain't goin'; he's comin'. Comin' out here in a few days after me. I'm his kind o' advance guard, spyin' out the land."

"You don't say? Well, see and make him come through with the expenses. If I was traveling for Jack Harris I wouldn't be sleeping in a hen coop like this. He's worth yards of money, ain't he?"

"Oh, some, I guess, but perhaps not so much more'n his neighbors."

"Nothing personal, Riles. You've got to get over that narrowness if you're going to get into the bigger game I've been telling you about. I don't care how much you're worth—how much is Harris bringing with him?"

"Couple of hundred dollars, likely."

"I wouldn't show my hand for that. How much can he raise?"

"Well, supposin' he sold the old farm——"

"Now don't do any reckless supposing. Will he sell the farm?"

"Sure, he'll sell it if he sees something better."

"How much can he get for it?"

"Thirty or $40,000."

"That's more like a stake, Hiram. It's up to you and me to show him something better—and to show it to him when he's alone. * * * You're tired tonight. Sleep it out, and we'll drive over to the ranch tomorrow together. We ought to pick something better than a homestead out of this."

(Continued Next Week)

Kansas City.—Five persons are known to have been killed and 28 injured, six or more perhaps fatally, here, when a one-man-operated street car got beyond control of the motorman, dashed down one of the longest, steepest grades in the city, struck a switch and was demolished. According to official reports, not a passenger on board the car escaped injury.

WOMAN IN CABINET NOW IS PROBABLE

PRESIDENT-ELECT HARDING TO ASK THE CREATION OF A NEW WELFARE DEPARTMENT.

WIDE FIELD FOR ITS WORK

Well Posted Persons Say a Woman Will Certainly Be Put at Its Head If the New Executive Has His Way.

By EDWARD B. CLARK.

Washington.—Members of congress, irrespective of party, and probably the people generally, are deeply interested in President-elect Harding's evident wish, and presumable intention, to ask for the creation of a welfare department in the national government with a woman at its head who is to be a member of the President's cabinet.

In a recent speech the President-elect said:

"I believe the participation by women will presently bring the men a better understanding of the necessities of women and children, of the home, the school and of other relations to the social structure. Likewise, I believe it will bring to women a larger and more adequate conception of the complex, difficult, inter-relationship between the problems of business, of politics, of finance, and of material administration."

There are existing today bureaus under different departments which are undertaking welfare work for the government. It is probable that if the new department is created by congress these bureaus will form the nucleus of the new and greater organization. Mr. Harding has gone so far as to speak directly of a new department and it is apparent from what he has said that he thinks a much greater field will open for its work than that now covered by the labors of the different bureaus.

Wants Woman at Its Head.

Persons who are close to the next President say there is no question at all as to his wish that a woman shall be put in charge of the new department of the federal government. If there is to be one. When the department is created, if congress shall consent to create it, various social and economic problems which have to do of course with the welfare of men, but often directly with that of women and children, will come within the scope of its activities. Questions relating to child labor, to education, to Americanization, to some extent sanitation, working hours for women, social endeavor generally and many other matters of concern to the public, naturally will group themselves within the circle of the department's endeavor.

It is nothing new to have a woman at the head of national government activities, although it is only recently that woman has come into her own in every part of the country as a voting citizen.

For a great many years a woman—Clara Barton—was at the head of the great Red Cross organization which in a large sense was a government organization. She was succeeded by Mabel Boardman, who, now that the war is over, has just been appointed a commissioner of the District of Columbia, the first woman ever to hold that office.

Women in High Offices.

Julia C. Lathrop, who was appointed by President Taft as chief of the children's bureau of the Department of Labor, still holds that office. The assistant chief also is a woman, Caroline Fleming. Miss Mary Van Kleek is the director of the women in industry service, which also is an office coming under the direction of the Department of Labor.

Other women hold high places in the government service, and Washington believes that, with the trend of events as they are, women more frequently will be advanced to high position.

There is a good deal of speculation in Washington, mostly of a gossipy kind, as to whom Mr. Harding will make the first woman cabinet officer in the history of the United States. Things being as they are, the natural supposition is that she will be a woman who is known as a Republican, but who also is known as a worker along welfare lines.

Among those who are spoken of as possibilities in the case is Harriet Taylor Upton of Ohio, who for many years has been interested in welfare work in the United States. She has worked unceasingly for the cause of women and children.

Julia C. Lathrop, head of the children's bureau, also is mentioned as a possibility. Miss Lathrop for years was connected with Hull House in Chicago. Still another name is that of Harriet E. Vittum of Chicago, who has been a social worker for years. She was a member of the Progressive party and was a stanch supporter of Theodore Roosevelt.

G. O. P. Conferences in Washington.

Marion is not the only place where Republican conferences are the order of the day. Washington has had a comprehensive series of closet talks by Republicans ever since the election. In one of these talks, President-elect Harding figured personally for he was in the city for a short time on his way back from Panama, but from the rest of them he has been absent.

One can take a list of the Republican senators of the United States, if he wishes a partially complete list of the conferees. To the names of the senators should be added those of Elihu Root and William Boyce Thompson of New York; Will H. Hays of Indiana, chairman of the Republican national committee; A. T. Hert, Republican national committeeman from Kentucky; Fred W. Upham of Chicago, treasurer of the Republican national committee; Harry M. Daugherty of Ohio, who was one of Mr. Harding's chief political managers; John W. Weeks of Massachusetts, former United States senator, and a dozen or so others of high party note.

The chief business of the Republican conferees, of course, is to discuss two things, legislation and high offices under the new administration. One cabinet after another has been placed upon the slates, only to be erased as the moods, the prejudices, the hopes and the fears of those doing the marking have dictated. There are one or two slates which still carry unmarred their superscription of names. If Marion is to see these slates it may be that the sponge will be passed rapidly over all of them. However, some of them may have the names inscribed left there, in part at least. Nobody knows.

List of Woe for Democrats.

The old Mikado song, "I Have Him on the List" has a double significance in Washington just now. There are lists of Republicans for high places, and lists of Democrats for "displaces." Both lists make interesting reading for Republicans with ambitions, but the second list is one of poignant pain for the faithful Democracy. What a sweep there is to be in this town when the March winds blow coldly for the Democrats, but with the balmy breath of May, yes, and even June, for the Republicans! Nevertheless, there will be some Republicans to whom the wind will be a blast from the far from benign region of the icebergs.

There are some Republicans already in place in the senate and house with no other ambition than that of hanging on to their jobs who stand, so to speak, on the side lines and watch interestedly the game. It is very much of a game, a guessing game, but in any lottery somebody has to guess right, and so when the message bearer comes forth from Marion there will be some of the faithful who will know that Fortuna, if this be the proper name of chance's goddess, has smiled upon them after standing for eight years with averted face.

Legion Head Tells of Neglect.

The senate committee on finance which has been holding hearings on the so-called bonus bill, has been told by Commander F. W. Galbraith of the American Legion that there are 20,000 veterans of the World war in hospitals, or in institutions, and that most of them are not being cared for properly.

What is the trouble? This is what is said to be the truth: "Congress has appropriated money enough to look after the men who went to the camps, or the battlefield when able-bodied compatriots were working in shipyards, or were otherwise engaged in lucrative, probably necessary, but most unquestionably safe occupations. The different bureaus whose charge it is to look after the incapacitated are trying to do their work. They cannot do it because there are too many bureaus. In other words, there is no one authorized central authority, and the efforts are so scattering that there can be no concentration in behalf of good results."

The sin of the thing is, as the legion men view it, that it is still to continue until congress with its thousand and one duties shall manage to put through some adequate legislation. The commander of the American Legion, in speaking before the finance committee in behalf of the bill to provide adjusted compensation for veterans, said in speaking for the American Legion, he believed that the members, so far as the case of the wounded is concerned, would be satisfied with the bill recently introduced in the senate by Mr. Capper of Kansas, and which now is in the keeping of the committee on finance.

Capper's Bill Suits Them.

The Kansas senator, or at least so the American Legion men seem to think, has introduced a bill which, if enacted into law, will make it possible to give the sick and wounded soldiers of the land that care and that chance for recovery which seems to be denied to many of them.

The bill establishes in the interior department a "bureau of veteran re-establishment." If this measure shall become a law there will be transferred to the new bureau the functions and duties of the bureau of war risk insurance, the federal board for vocational education, and certain duties now imposed upon the United States public health service.

Under the various bureaus now existing attempts are being made to care for the veterans who are incapacitated. The boys are scattered, here, there and everywhere. The records pertaining to their cases are scattered. Some of the hospitals, or so-called hospitals, are not proper places for men stricken with wounds and disease. When the new bureau is established it will have the authority to establish hospitals of its own provided existing facilities are not sufficient.

The Worst Way.

"Was Bliggins hazed while at college?"

"The worst way possible. When the other boys were being made subjects of the customary practical jokes Bliggins received no notice whatsoever."